DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 385 817 CS 012 195

AUTHOR Dale, Jennifer; Radell, Kirsten
TITLE Effects of Instruction on Time Spent Reading and Reading Attitudes.
PUB DATE [95]
NOTE 10p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Basal Reading; Comparative Analysis; *Instructional Effectiveness; Primary Education; *Reading Attitudes; *Student Attitudes; *Time on Task; *Whole Language Approach
IDENTIFIERS T Test

ABSTRACT

A study investigated the relationship between type of reading instruction (whole language or basal), and (1) time spent engaged in authentic reading activities and (2) reading attitudes as measured by the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS). Subjects, 23 students from a blended first/second grade whole language classroom in a suburban district and 18 students from a traditional second grade classroom in a more rural area participated in the study. McKenna and Kear's ERAS was administered and the mean scores on academic recreation and the total means were analyzed using a t-test. Results showed no significant difference in academic attitude between the two classrooms; however, the recreational scores were slightly higher in the whole language classroom. The researchers also gathered observational data on the amount of time each class spent engaged in authentic (as defined by researchers) reading and writing. The whole language class spent significantly more time on these tasks. The attitude survey results were consistent with previous studies which showed that recreational scores are higher in whole language classrooms. Contains three tables of data and 10 references. (Author/SR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 385 817

Effects of Instruction on Time Spent Reading and Reading Attitudes

Jennifer Dale
Kirsten Radell

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. Dale
Kirsten Radell

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

CS012195

ABSTRACT:

This study investigated the relationship between type of reading instruction, whole language or basal, and time spent engaged in authentic reading activities and on reading attitudes as measured by the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS). 23 students from a whole language classroom and 18 students from a traditional classroom participated in the study. McKenna and Kear's ERAS was administered and the mean scores on academic recreation and the total means were analyzed using a t-test. The results of this analysis showed no significant difference in academic attitude between the two classrooms, however, the recreational scores were sightly higher in the whole language classroom. The researchers also gathered observational data on the amount of time each class spent engaged in authentic (as defined by researchers) reading and writing. The whole language class spent significantly more time on these tasks. The attitude survey results were consistent with previous studies which showed that recreational scores are higher in whole language classrooms.

It has been established that whole language classrooms spend more time engaged in reading and writing activities than traditional classrooms; these activities are authentic in nature as well. Children in whole language classrooms read trade books and diversified literature; they also write fiction, nonfiction, poetry, business letters, and friendly letters, just to name a few. Whereas in traditional classrooms the children typically read (out of date) basals, write in workbooks, have weekly spelling words, and do copy exercises.

There don't seem to be any significant gains in achievement, as shown by standardized tests, between the two types of instruction (Dewalt, Rhyne-Winkler, & Rubel, 1993; Milligan, & Berg, 1992). Studies have shown that tests, such as the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS), Georgia Criterion Referenced Test, and the California Achievement Test (Holland & Hall, 1989; Morrison & Suggett-Doyle,

1992), don't show any significant gains after one year between those students in whole language and traditional classrooms. For example, Morrison and Suggett-Doyle looked at seventh and eighth grade students in a writing program. The first year the instruction was traditional and the second year the teachers implemented a whole language program. The results of the CTBS showed no significant differences between the two classes, but the researchers did note differences that couldn't be measured with that standardized test .

People assume that no skills are taught in a whole language classroom, but in reality they are; they are taught in context, with real print, and in purposeful situations. Morrison and Suggett-Doyle (1992) found that 28 higher level skills, like story mapping and expository writing, were taught in a literature based seventh/eighth grade class than in the regular classroom where skills were the main focus.

Research has shown that the type of instruction children receive will influence their attitude toward reading and writing. Shapiro (1992) found that elementary children receiving basal instruction had less positive attitudes toward reading that their counterparts in whole language. Barnett and Irwin (1994) found that children in traditional classrooms liked to read less, while students that read trade books and didn't have to complete worksheets for reading like to read better. Diffily (1992) found that kindergarten students in a whole language classroom thought of themselves as authors, and children in the traditional classroom didn't even know what an author was. Those same children in the traditional classroom viewed writing as merely copying teacher given words and sentences. These studies seem to show that children do in fact have better attitudes toward reading and writing depending on their instruction.

A study by Guthrie, Schafer, Wang, and Afflerbach (1995) considered the relationship of instruction to the amount of reading. Although they did not compare

whole language to traditional classrooms as we did, they examined the connection of social, cognitive, instructional, and home factors that influence the amount of reading done by children at three age levels; 9, 13, and 17. At the 9 year old level large amounts of reading activity was associated with instruction that emphasized comprehension processes. Active readers reported high levels of social interaction and these social interactions seemed to foster the frequency of choosing to read. At the 13 and 17 age level, student centered instruction was associated with amount of reading indirectly. Teachers whole allowed for self-expression and emphasized diverse interpretations fostered more reading activity than teachers who did not.

As teachers, our goals for our reading program will be to teach our children to read and to foster a life long love of reading. Research has shown that instructional approaches influence student attitudes toward reading but do not influence reading achievement. In this study the researchers have asked: Does the amount of time engaged in authentic reading experiences relate to the type of instruction and to students attitudes of reading as measured by the ERAS? As perspective teachers we hope that this research will help guide the instructional decisions we will be faced with.

Method

41 students participated in our study. 23 students from a blended first/second grade were in the whole language classroom in a suburban district. 18 second grade students were in that traditional classroom in a more rural area. Our goal was to observe the daily happenings of each room, and to note how much actual time was spent reading and writing. One researcher (R1) spent the day in the traditional classroom, while the other researcher (R2) spent the day in the whole language classroom. We each took anecdotal/observation notes of the daily reading and writing activities that occurred in the rooms.

We timed how long the students spent on authentic reading and writing activities. To be sure that we were measuring/timing the same things, we defined authentic and unauthentic reading and writing. Reading can be classified as authentic when it is reading of quality literature, including picture books, folk tales, fables, myths, science fiction, poetry, fiction, and non-fiction (Morrison, 1993). It can also be reading works written by the children. Authentic writing is writing with a purpose and a goal with emphasis on the process rather than the product. These programs are more student centered, and focus on individual interests and needs.

Unauthentic reading will generally include adapted and controlled literature such as the stories found in outdated Basal series. We recognize that newer Basals offer quality literaute while had been preserved. The reading skills are taught in isolation and systematically according to the publishers scope and sequence. Unauthentic writing will be writing that is product driven, for example, workbook pages, skill dittos, and copy writing in while students copy sentences and words.

We started timing when the activity started and then noted the time when the activity ceased. We then added up our total times for all the reading and writing activities engaged in to come up with an estimated day total.

At some point during the day we administered McKenna and Kear's Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) to see if any attitudinal differences existed between the groups due to their type of instruction. The ERAS measures recreational and academic attitudes towards reading.

Results and Discussion

The results of the ERAS showed no significant differences between the whole language and traditional classrooms. The means were analyzed for academic and recreational attitudes, and the total scores for each classroom. A t-test was used to

compare the mean scores between the traditional and whole language classrooms. The results of the t-test showed no significant differences in the reading attitudes between the two classes in any of the areas. Although not significant, the recreational scores showed a slight difference between the two rooms in favor of the whole language classroom (t= .149 with df =29.6).

These findings are consistent with other studies (Morrison & Suggett-Doyle 1992; Diffily, 1992; Shapiro, 1991; Holland & Hall, 1989). The academic scores, again not significant, were also consistent with other research in that the whole language classroom was comparable to the traditional classroom.

We did find that the standard deviation scores were noticeably different. The whole language room had a much smaller standard deviation (9.678) while the traditional classroom standard deviation was much larger (14.713). This indicates that the whole language attitudes were more centralized and the whole language class tended to hold similar attitudes. The traditional classroom's scores were spread out from one extreme to the other, indicating a mixture of attitudes and more decentralized scores.

The results of the classroom observation and the amount of engaged in authentic/unauthentic reading and writing presented interesting differences. Table one shows the amount and type of authentic reading in the two classrooms. Table two shows the amount and type of unauthentic reading and writing in the two classrooms. Table three shows the amount of transition time and "wasted" time in the classrooms. While this was not part of the original research, when comparing the classrooms this was an interesting and significant finding. One of the reasons the traditional classroom had more transition time was due to the "departmentalized" curriculum in which the subjects were viewed as separate from each other instead integrated.

Table 1 Authentic Reading and Writing

Traditional	Minutes	Whole Language	Minutes
Teacher Read Aloud	20	Student of the Week	5
		"Candle in the Wind"	3
		mini lesson for writing	12
		writing time	25
		Sharing time	8
		Practice journal entry	1
		Reading selected stories	37
		Movie with reading	5
		Math journal writing	10
		Class journal	11
		Easter Poem	3
		Total	120

Table 2 Unauthentic Reading and Writing

Traditional	Minutes	Whole Language	Minutes
Oral skill chart	10		
Workbook	11		
Workbook	15		
Workbook	10		
Copy poem	2		
Spelling test	9		
Correct workbooks	20		
Total	77		

Table 3 Transition and "Wasted" Time

Traditional	Minutes	Whole Language	Minutes
Teacher Prep.	10	Reading to outside	10
Student unprepared	4	Outside to math	10
Ready for lunch	15		
Bathroom/Rest	15		
Drinks after gym	15		
Total	59	Total	20

Conclusion

Our study of 23 whole language first and second graders and 20 traditionally instructed second graders showed that although the findings of the ERAS were not significant, the whole language recreational reading scores were slightly higher than those of the traditional students.

In recording the amount of time spent engaged in authentic reading and writing tasks, as defined earlier, it is obvious that more time is spent on authentic tasks in the whole language room. This can be seen as reflective of the philosophical differences between the two instructional practices. The whole language classroom placed more emphasis on the process of reading and writing while the traditional classroom emphasized the product.

While research has shown no academic gains in whole language classrooms, they have also shown no losses. If research shows that whole language students have better attitudes, increased motivation, and spend more time reading aren't these gains enough to show that indeed whole language is a viable alternative to traditional reading instruction?

The conclusions of this study are limited by the size of the sample and the duration of the study. Further research is still needed to address the issues fueling the debate of traditional and whole language classrooms. Our recommendations for further research are:

1. Longitudinal studies that span over more than one year.
2. Larger sample sizes including more classrooms.
3. Include qualitative data, such as student and teacher interviews, as well as extensive observation time.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barnett, J. E., & Irwin, L. (1994). The effects of classroom activities on elementary students' reading attitudes. Reading Improvement, 31(2), 113-119.

Dewalt, M., Ryne-Winkler, M., & Rubel, C. (1993). Effects of instructional method on reading comprehension. Reading Improvement, 30(2), 93-100.

Diffily, D. (1992). Kindergarteners' concept of author: Comparison between a developmentally appropriate classroom and a traditional classroom. ERIC Reproduction Service No. 351 105.

Guthrie, J. T., Schafer, W., Wang, Y., & Afflerbach, P. (1995). Relationship of instruction to amount of reading: An exploration of social, cognitive, and instructional connections. Reading Reseach Quarterly, 30(1), 8-24.

Holland, K., & Hall, L. (1989). Reading achievement in the first grade classroom: A comparison of basal and whole language approaches. Reading Improvement, 25, 323-329.

McKenna, M. C., & Kear, D. J. (1990). Measuring attitude toward reading: A new tool for teachers. The Reading Teacher, 43(9), 626-639.

Milligan, J., & Berg, H. (1992). The effects of whole language on the comprehending ability of first grade children. Reading Improvement, 29(3), 146-154.

Morrison, J., & Mosser, L. (1993). Whole language and traditional reading instruction: A comparison of teacher views and techniques. ERIC Reproduction Service No. 365 963.

Morrison, T. G., & Suggett-Doyle, C. (1992). Writing to improve reading for seventh and eighth grade students. Reading Improvement, 29(1), 25-33.

Shapiro, J., & White, W. (1991). Reading attitudes and perceptions in traditional and nontraditional reading programs. Reading Research and Instruction, 30(4), 52-66.